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ABSTRACT

"Teaching with Historic Places" is a program administered by the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places that identifies ways teachers can share the stories that historic places have to tell. The program creates classroom-ready educational materials based on properties that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To date there are 55 published lesson plans with an additional 43 in development for publication. The lessons feature well-known landmarks like Gettysburg (Pennsylvania) and Manassas (Virginia). They also present units about lesser know sites like the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in the Knife River valley of North Dakota and the "Black Metropolis" of southside Chicago (Illinois). The program meets the requirements of the National Council for the Social Studies "Curriculum Standards for the Social Studies." In addition, professional development for teachers and preservation personnel is available. The inservice program includes published materials and training activities. (JH)

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Including Historic Places in the Social Studies Curriculum

by Marilyn Harper

Places have powerful stories to tell. They speak through relationships to their settings, their plan and design, their building materials, their atmosphere and ambience, their furniture, and other objects they contain. They can evoke the ghosts of the people who once lived and worked there. These places provide physical evidence of how broad currents of history affect even small communities. Supplemented with primary or secondary written and visual materials, they also teach such skills as observation, working with maps, interpreting visual evidence, evaluating bias, analysis, comparison and contrast, and problem-solving.

Teaching with Historic Places, a program administered by the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places, offers a variety of ways to share this "power of place" with students across the nation. At the heart of the program is a series of more than 50 classroom-ready lesson plans based on historic places listed in the National Register. These lessons allow teachers to use historic places to bring the new standards in geography, history, and social studies into their classrooms.

Project Background. During the 1980s and early 1990s, many people interested in saving historic places came to see what was usually called "heritage education" as a way to: 1) use places as lively and challenging resources to enrich teaching and learning for students, 2) help teachers, preservationists, and others to work together in their communities, and, ultimately, 3) encourage and strengthen public commitment to preserving these places. A survey conducted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1990 identified more than 600 heritage education programs.

In 1991 and 1992 the National Register, which contains files on over 67,000 historic places, and the National Trust called together leading educators, preservationists, and interpreters to provide advice on creating a heritage education program. The Teaching with Historic Places project that grew out of these meetings follows their recommendation to focus on two principal activities: 1) creating classroom-ready educational materials that are based on properties listed in the National Register and that meet the needs of the education reform movement, and 2) providing professional development to train educators, preservationists, and others in using places as teaching tools.

Publications and Training Activities. Teaching with Historic Places educational materials currently include 55 published lesson plans and another 43 in development for publication. The National Register properties on which these lesson plans are based range from well-known landmarks like Gettysburg and Manassas to the eccentric roadside architecture stimulated by America's love affair with the car, and from the archeological remains of Mandan and Hidatsa villages in the Knife River valley of North Dakota to the "Black Metropolis" of southside Chicago. Each lesson plan includes maps, readings, photographs, and other primary and secondary documents, providing most of what students will need whether or not they can visit the place. Questions and activities help students practice skills of fact-finding, synthesis, and analysis. Each lesson also leads students into their communities to look for historic properties that relate to the theme of the lesson. The published lesson plans are available for purchase from Jackdaw Publications, P. O. Box 503, Amawalk, NY 10501; (800) 789-0022.

Teaching with Historic Places professional development activities include both training programs and publications. Programs range from three-credit graduate courses to week-long workshops to short sessions at professional association meetings. Published materials include *A Curriculum Framework for Professional Training and Development* and *How to Teach with Historic Places: A Technical Assistance Sourcebook*. Both publications are available from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 588-6286.

Teaching with Historic Places and the Curriculum Standards. Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans and historic places in general are well-suited to meet the new national standards in geography and history. Student understanding of the relationship between people, places, and the environment and mastery of geographic skills are two of the four outcomes that the geography standards seek to accomplish. Historic places provide concrete examples of how proximity to transportation corridors, important sources of minerals and other raw materials, or other physical features affects human settlement patterns (Standard 15). Places also show how human activities modify their physical environment (Standard 14). Using maps helps students practice the skills of acquiring, processing, and reporting spatial information (Standard 1). Places that are parts of larger production and distribution systems dramatize the patterns and networks that tie distant places together in a web of economic interdependence (Standard 11).

By making connections between specific places and broad and generally recognized patterns of history, Teaching with Historic Places lessons also help meet the standards for history and the curriculum materials based on those standards. Standard 4, Historical Research Capabilities, specifically identifies historic sites as one type of historical data source. In addition, lesson plans often provide students with historical

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photos, journals, eyewitness accounts, and other primary sources of historical data identified in Standard 4. Exercises relating to these sources encourage students to practice careful observation, investigation, analysis, interpretation, comparison, and evaluation of bias (Standard 3, Historical Analysis and Interpretation). Integrative activities that encourage students to go beyond the data they have gathered to make comparisons, identify causal connections, draw conclusions, and evaluate alternative courses of action respond directly to Standard 3 and also address Standard 5, Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making. Each lesson includes at least one activity leading students to look for places in their own community that relate to the theme of the lesson. In this way, the lessons also respond to Item 13 in the list of criteria for development of the Standards: "Standards ... should utilize regional and local history ... [to] enhance the broader patterns of U.S. and world history" (1996, 44).

Using historic places in teaching also helps teachers develop curriculum based on the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* developed by the National Council for the Social Studies. Teaching with Historic Places by its very nature integrates teaching and learning across the curriculum, one of the principles that underlie all of the social studies curriculum standards. All historic places teach about history and geography; many also strengthen language arts and may involve the fine arts, science, and even math. "People, Places, and Environment" (Theme II) is one of the ten themes around which the standards are organized. Because places are often the most characteristic representation of cultures poorly documented in written records, educational materials based on place can be particularly effective in helping students understand and appreciate those cultures (Theme I). Many activities included in Teaching with Historic Places lessons require community involvement, whether it be in the form of encouraging environmentally responsible individual behavior or identifying and working to protect historic resources. These activities respond to Theme X by encouraging civic ideals and practices.

Finally, working with real places where real history occurred, whether or not they can be visited, takes history off the pages of the textbook, recreating some of the excitement of historical research and contributing to an empathetic understanding of the past. This lively, experiential learning that is both substantive and challenging is the ultimate goal of all of the standards and of good teachers everywhere.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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